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Washington, DC –Representatives Harry Teague, Martin Heinrich and Ben Ray Luján praised the first provisions of the Credit CARD Act taking effect today, Thursday, August 20th. The reforms are part of a package that will help protect consumers from excessive credit card fees and retroactive interest rate hikes. The legislation also seeks to shield consumers from unfair and misleading agreements that may be repeatedly revised at the discretion of credit card companies. The protections were hailed as “necessary consumer protections” by the delegation.

“Families across southern New Mexico are struggling to make ends meet and their situation is being made worse by deceptive and unfair practices,” said Congressman Harry Teague. “I am pleased to see this bill provide the assurances every consumer deserves while bringing common sense and consumer protection back to our financial system.”

“The Credit Cardholders’ Bill of Rights will take common sense steps to protect families from unfair credit practices during these difficult economic times,” said Congressman Luján. “It is encouraging that important consumer protection provisions of this important legislation are taking effect today.”

“New Mexicans have the responsibility to live within their means and pay what they owe, but the government has the responsibility to make sure our credit card industry is playing by the rules,” said Representative Martin Heinrich. “The Credit Cardholders' Bill of Rights will put fairness back on the side of New Mexico consumers and impact households across America.”

Beginning Thursday, credit card companies will be required to provide written notice at least 45 days in advance of any increases in interest rates or other significant changes in the credit card terms while informing customers of their right to cancel their accounts before changes take effect. Additionally, companies must send statements to consumers earlier--notices must now be sent 21 days before any payment due date.

Come February 2010, many of the new law's remaining provisions will be put in to effect, including a ban on double-cycle billing and rate hikes on existing balances.